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Letter dated 25 May 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Ethiopia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith a statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, issued on 25 May 2000, entitled "Ethiopia's commitment to peace unchanged" (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Fisseha **Yimer**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 25 May 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Ethiopia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Ethiopia's commitment to peace unchanged

Eritrea's aggression against Ethiopia is being reversed step by step through the heroic efforts of the armed forces. The crumbling of positions held by Eritrea in the Mereb-Zalanbessa-Alitena front is in full view. Although Ethiopia always preferred the road of peace to regain its sovereignty over its occupied territories, the OAU peace process was not allowed to succeed due to the long-standing intransigent position of the Eritrean regime.

Only three weeks ago in Algiers the OAU-sponsored proximity talks were scuttled because Eritrea refused to enter into substantial discussions on the implementation of the OAU peace plan and, in particular, on the peaceful withdrawal of Eritrean forces from occupied Ethiopian territory.

Today, as the Ethiopian defence forces dislodge Eritrean invading troops from occupied territories, paying with the blood of sacrifice, the Asmara regime without shame declares that it is withdrawing its troops to comply with the wishes of OAU, and the world is expected to believe and partake in what has become a despicable farce.

The world should not be deceived by this outdated Eritrean tactic of laundering the facts and presenting a mask of peace when it has been humiliated on the battlefield. The charade of camouflaging a most aggressive and callous regime which until the last minute forced the needless shedding of blood of both Ethiopians and Eritreans because of its allergic reaction to the peace process cannot be allowed to continue unchallenged. There is a sense of déjà vu. We have seen all this before.

Ethiopia and the international community were witnesses to the sacrifices paid by the sons and daughters of this country to liberate the Badme area in February 1999. It took the Eritrean dictator 24 hours following his defeat to declare that he was withdrawing from the area and was ready to accept the OAU Framework Agreement. Having thus bought valuable time to regroup and reorganize the Eritrean regime continued to hold on to Ethiopian territory for more than 15 months.

History has repeated itself today. Defying OAU and the international community, the Isaias regime forced a war upon the peoples of Ethiopia and Eritrea. Again, it is the sons and daughters of Ethiopia that paid the price evicting an entrenched invader from the Mereb-Zalanbessa-Alitena front. Predictably, the Asmara regime declares that it is withdrawing from the territory from which it is being driven out, and expresses readiness for talks. It is clear that Eritrea is engaged in a ploy to buy time in order to save its battered army so that it could continue with its aggressive behaviour. Even at this moment, on the Mereb-Zalanbessa-Alitena front, fierce fighting is continuing in limited areas.

Ethiopia wishes to make it clear that even now large chunks of territory in the eastern and north-eastern part of Ethiopia — in the Afar Regional State — are still occupied by Eritrea. The war can only come to an end when Ethiopia has verified that Eritrea has removed its forces of occupation from all the remaining Ethiopian territory under their control.

At the same time, Ethiopia wishes to reiterate that it has no desire to remain in Eritrean territory that it holds temporarily for the purpose of military expediency.

Ethiopia also wishes to reaffirm its support and appreciation for the continuing efforts of OAU and its current Chairman, President Abdulaziz Boutiflika of Algeria, who visited Ethiopia this week. Prime Minister Meles Zenawi has assured the current Chairman that Ethiopia's commitment to the peace process under OAU auspices is firm and principled.

25 May 2000
Ministry of Foreign Affairs